

## **AGENDA ITEM #12**

September 14, 2001

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Lori Clamurro, Delta Protection Commission Staff

Subject: Develop Proposal with Nonprofit Partner to Seek Funds from the California Farmland Conservancy Program to Identify Agricultural Lands of Particular Importance in the Delta Primary Zone  
*(For Possible Commission Action)*

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### **PROPOSED ACTION:**

The Commission should review and discuss the attached information and draft project outline and possibly direct staff to pursue a nonprofit partner to then seek grant funds. If so directed, staff would return with a specific agreement, grant application, and revised project description for Commission review and approval.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Delta Protection Act recognizes that “the delta is an agricultural region of great value to the state and nation and the retention and continued cultivation and production of fertile peatlands and prime soils are of significant value.” The Act directs the Commission to “protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the delta environment including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities.”

At the August 7, 2001 Agriculture Committee meeting, there was discussion of possible funding sources for agricultural planning for the Delta area to delineate high-productivity agricultural lands that should be retained in agriculture as part of a balanced land use vision for the Delta Primary Zone. The report could be used by the Commission to revise and/or update the Agriculture Policies in the Commission’s Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta. Any planning process would be carried out with participation by Delta counties and local land trusts. The Agriculture Committee directed staff to prepare a more specific concept to present to the full Commission.

The primary funding option considered by the Committee was an application for a planning grant from the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), administered by the Department of Conservation’s Division of Land Resource Protection.

Commission staff met with CFCP staff on August 23, 2001, to discuss this idea further. Per CFCP staff, the Commission, a State agency, is ineligible to receive grant funding from the program; only local governments, special districts, and non-profit organizations are able to apply. Grants generally do not exceed \$50,000.

Attached is an outline of potential tasks the Commission and its partnering entity may include in a grant application to CFCP. The Agriculture Committee meeting scheduled for September 11, 2001, was cancelled, so the Committee has not discussed the attached outline.

About the proposal:

A consultant would be hired to come up with a **Delta Farmland Preservation Strategy** and associated **Implementation Plan**; this would include administrative activities associated with providing the various work products to the Delta Protection Commission for review.

Possible Outline of Tasks Associated with Final Work Products:

- I. Establishment of a Baseline of Delta Agriculture Information
  - A. Product: GIS maps and associated data on ownership, easements, and management
- II. Public Outreach Component
  - A. Conduct workshops with landowners to discuss development of a Delta Farmland Preservation Strategy
- III. Identification of Priority Agricultural Lands for Preservation in the Delta
  - A. Possible Criteria
    - 1. NRCS Soil Data
    - 2. LESA evaluation criteria
    - 3. “Prime” and/or other classifications of agricultural land (DOC)
    - 4. Water
    - 5. Parcel Size
    - 6. Others?
- IV. Preservation Strategies on Priority Agricultural Lands – for possible inclusion as Policies within DPC’s Land Use and Resource Management Plan
  - A. Public Ownership
    - 1. Recommendations on management for wildlife-friendly agriculture to be incorporated into management plans
  - B. Private Ownership
    - 1. Recommendations on management for wildlife-friendly agriculture
    - 2. State and federal incentive programs
  - C. Use of Agricultural Easements
- V. Product: Delta Farmland Preservation Strategy (incorporating information from Tasks I through IV)
  - A. Policies that may be incorporated into DPC’s Land Use and Resource Management Plan
    - 1. Mitigation for Loss of Agricultural Land
- VI. Product: Delta Farmland Preservation Strategy Implementation Plan
  - A. Costs
    - 1. Initial cost of agricultural conservation easements
    - 2. Other financial incentive programs; possible operations & maintenance cost reimbursement
  - B. Funding Sources
    - 1. CFCP (easements)
    - 2. Other State and federal incentives programs
    - 3. CALFED (wildlife-friendly agriculture demonstration projects?)
    - 4. Other private foundations and land trusts